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ACTION SS-30

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E.O. 12065: XDS 8/18/00 (RUSER, CLAUS W.) OR-M
TAGS: MILI, PINS, BL, AR
SUBJECT: BOLIVIA AND US-ARGENTINE RELATIONS - CONVERSATION
WITH AIR FORCE GENERAL GARCIA

1. C - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. ON AUGUST 12, OVER LUNCH GENERAL JUAN GARCIA (AIR FORCE
DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL), WHOM I HAVE KNOWN SINCE HIS
TOUR IN WASHINGTON AS AIR FORCE ATTACHE, DISCUSSED WITH
APPARENT CANDOR THE ARGENTINE ACTIONS IN BOLIVIA AND
REACTION TO POSTPONEMENT OF THE BOWDLER VISIT.

3. ON BOLIVIA, HE CLAIMED, THE DECISION TO PROCEED WITH
THE COUP HAD BEEN GARCIA MEZA'S. THE COUP COULD NOT
HAVE COME AT A WORSE TIME; IT SHOULD HAVE COME, IF AT ALL,
EITHER MUCH EARLIER OR MUCH LATER. THE ARGENTINE ADVICE, GARCIA
CLAIMED, HAD BEEN THAT SILES ZUAZO BE PERMITTED TO TAKE
OFFICE AND THAT HE BE REPLACED ONLY AFTER HE DEMONSTRATES HIS
INCAPACITY TO GOVERN. GARCIA MEZA, HOWEVER, HAD RE-
SPONDED THAT HE COULD NOT WAIT; LEFTIST INFILTRATION
WAS PROCEEDING TOO RAPIDLY. (I SPECIFICALLY ASKED
WHETHER THE DESIRABILITY TO DEFER A COUP HAD BEEN AN
AIR FORCE POINT OF VIEW; HE ALLEGED IT WAS THE GOVERNMENT'S.)

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4. REACTION TO POSTPONEMENT OF BOWDLER VISIT. GEN.
GARCIA (LIKE ALL MY OTHER INTERLOCUTORS) STRESSED
ARGENTINA'S GOOD WILL TOWARD THE UNITED STATES. AS
EVIDENCE, HE CITED THAT THERE WAS VIRTUALLY NO ANTI-
AMERICAN GOVERNMENT-INSPIRED MATERIAL IN THE ARGENTINE
PRESS. (COMMENT. THIS IS ESSENTIALLY CORRECT FOR THE
PRESS.) GENERAL GRAFFIGNA WAS PERSONALLY INTERESTED
IN FINDING WAYS TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS DESPITE
BOLIVIA. (COMMENT. I EXPECT TO CALL ON GRAFFIGNA,
WHO HAS BEEN OUT OF TOWN, IN THE NEXT WEEK OR SO.)

5. GENERAL GARCIA WONDERED HOW WE SAW BOLIVIA'S
FUTURE, WHAT CURRENT US OBJECTIVES WERE, AND HOW US-
ARGENTINE RELATIONS COULD BE IMPROVED. HE RAISED THE
IDEA OF AN ARGENTINE EMISSARY TO WASHINGTON. PURSUANT
TO THE DEPARTMENT'S INSTRUCTIONS, I DISCOURAGED THE
IDEA, NOTING THAT THE TIME WAS NOT RIGHT FOR THIS.

RUSER

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~~Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP~~
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